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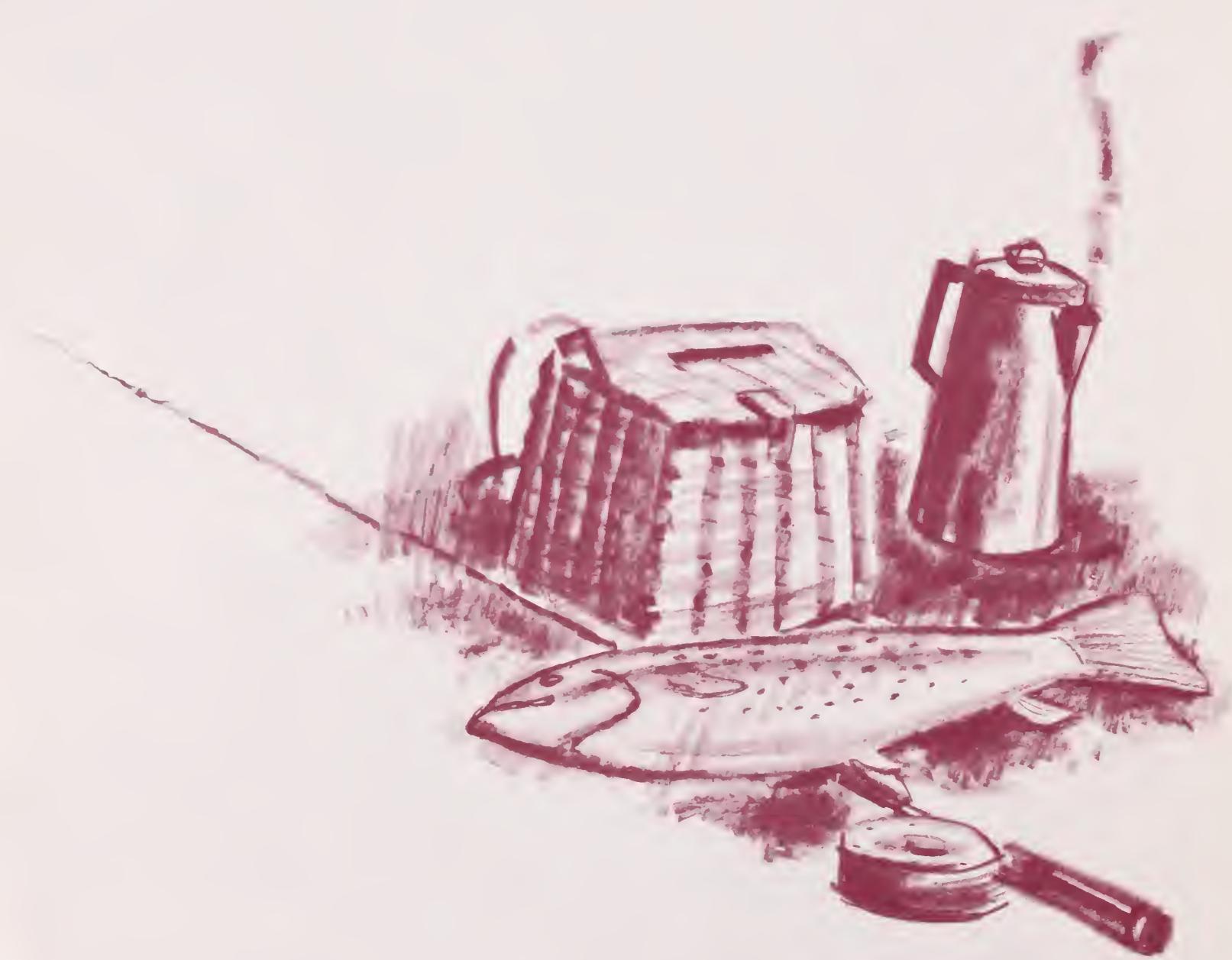
CAMPING



The National Forests
AMERICA'S
PLAYGROUNDS

104(a) 1988

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Forest Service • PA-502



brook trout and campfire coffee

The tempting aroma of campfire coffee mixed with wood smoke drifted through the open tent door. But Jean burrowed further in her sleeping bag and squeezed her eyes shut hard. She wasn't getting up yet; this was a special time she'd looked forward to for months.

The children were urging their father in excited whispers to start frying the fish. Jim had crawled out of his bag at dawn to get brook trout for this, their first breakfast in camp. It was a family tradition, Jim's making breakfast the first day. Jean would take over after this, but right now she was enjoying every minute of the unusual luxury.

It was good to know the youngsters liked camping. They should, of course. She had met Jim at a National Forest campground, and they'd vacationed in the forests ever since, taking the children even when they were babes in arms.

When the hot fat started to crackle in the frying pan, she knew it was time to open her eyes and let them know she was awake. Sure enough, the sun was edging over the eastern ridge, splashing its color across the top of Pine Mountain to the west. Brr . . . it was nippy! She could tell by the tip of her nose. She'd forgotten that in the mountains August nights are cold.

“How about a cup of coffee in bed?” she called.

“She’s awake!” the youngsters shouted. “Now we can talk.”

Bless them, they thought they’d been quiet all this time.

Thus one family started its camping vacation—one of millions of families that each year head for America’s Playgrounds, the 155 National Forests and 19 National Grasslands administered by the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

IS CAMPING REALLY FUN?

Every year more people enjoy the National Forests and National Grasslands—187 million acres of the best of our country's magnificent outdoors. Nearly 5,000 campgrounds, with a capacity of 425,000 people at one time, are provided on these public lands. These areas now host more than twice as many campers as 15 years ago. Camping accounts for over one-quarter of all recreational activities in the National Forests and National Grasslands.

How and why do all these folks find fun pitching camp and roughing it in the woods?

Many of them hunt. As home for one-third of the big-game animals in the United States, the National Forests are the unposted, happy hunting grounds of our Nation. Other campers enjoy some of the finest fishing in the country, along thousands of miles of clear streams and at natural lakes and manmade reservoirs located in the National Forests.





Campers also go hiking, swimming, boating, water-skiing, motorscooting, and horseback riding. They pick berries, collect rocks, watch birds, and photograph wild flowers, wild animals, the superb scenery, and one another. They also spend time contemplating, socializing, and singing around the evening campfire.

Obviously there's no simple explanation for the strong attraction Americans feel for the outdoors. Each person comes for reasons special to him, and possibly just to be in the open, living close to the land. Fortunately for a Nation of people strongly drawn to the outdoors, open space and forest recreation, even in this age of urban sprawl, are still readily available and easily reached. Numerous major roads, some of them Scenic Forest Highways, pass through the National Forests.

Good maps are useful to the camper in planning trips and are necessary when traveling unfamiliar roads. In addition to showing National Forests, many atlases and roadmaps distributed by service stations and State highway departments indicate the location of recreation areas in National Forests, as well as recreation areas on other Federal and State public lands and on private lands. To obtain detailed recreation maps of National Forests before your trip, write to the Forest Service regional office administering the forests you wish to visit. (Addresses are on the inside back cover of this booklet.) When you enter a forest, stop at the District Forest Ranger's station; he will be pleased to assist in making your visit an enjoyable and rewarding experience.



CAMPING—IT'S AN AMERICAN TRADITION

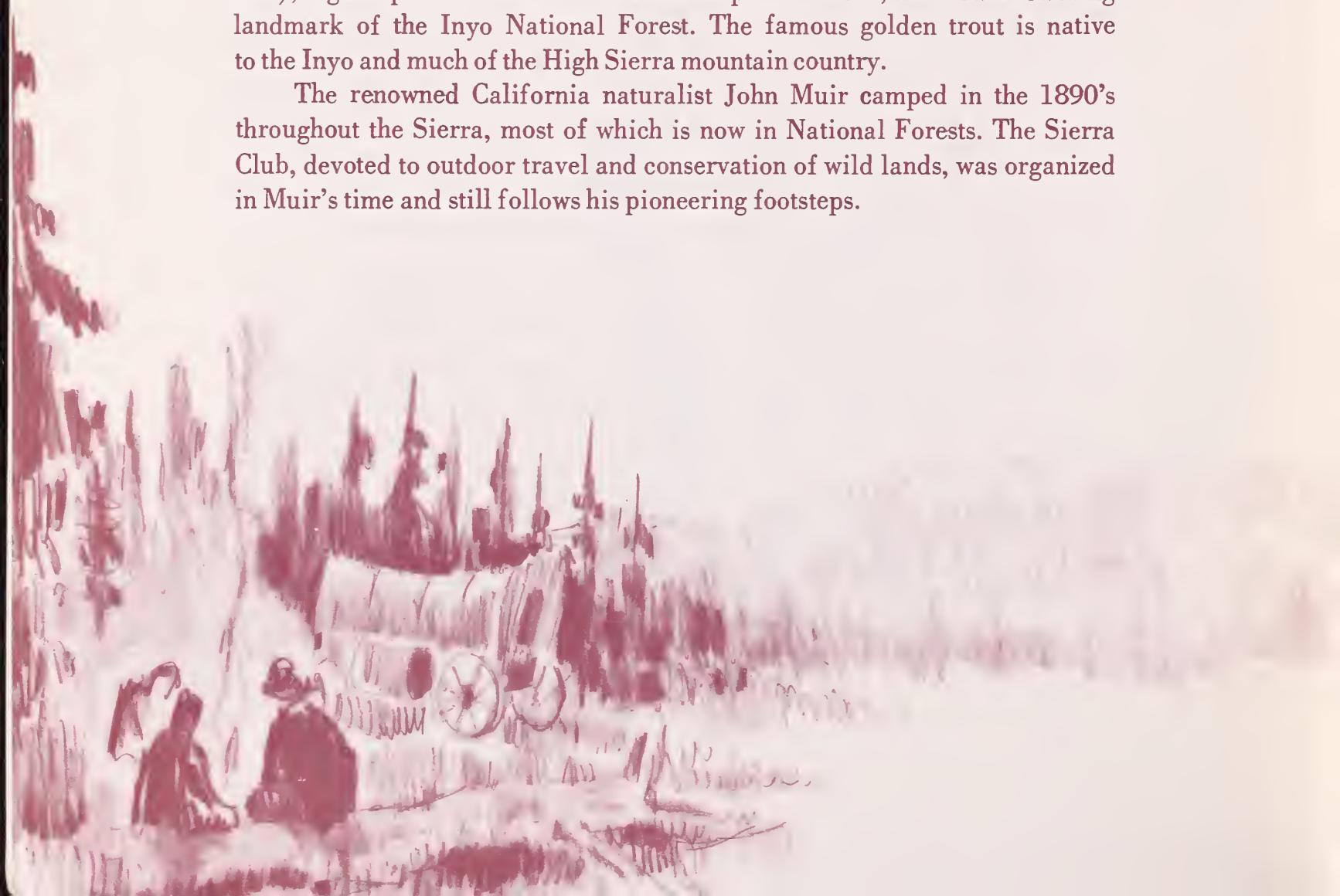
The use of forests for many purposes is traditional with a people for whom the outdoors has always been close at hand. Our forefathers hunted and fished forest lands and used forest trees for building. Often in their travels, though more from necessity than for fun, they camped deep in the woods.

In later years, but still long before the establishment of the National Forests, Americans were finding relaxation and challenge in camping, fishing, hunting, and otherwise exploring the Nation's back country. Near Salt Lake City, Utah, on July 24, 1856, the President of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young, held a "Pic-nic Party" in Big Cottonwood Canyon in what is now the Wasatch National Forest. Some 450 people traveled most of the previous day and camped overnight in the canyon so as to be on time for the party.

In the 1880's the Appalachian Mountain Club was laying out trails and camping all over New Hampshire's White Mountains and their rugged Presidential Range, now the White Mountain National Forest.

In California, fishermen were the first to climb Mount Whitney (14,496 feet), highest point in the United States except for Alaska, and now a towering landmark of the Inyo National Forest. The famous golden trout is native to the Inyo and much of the High Sierra mountain country.

The renowned California naturalist John Muir camped in the 1890's throughout the Sierra, most of which is now in National Forests. The Sierra Club, devoted to outdoor travel and conservation of wild lands, was organized in Muir's time and still follows his pioneering footsteps.





Redfish Lake Outlet Campground, Sawtooth National Forest, Idaho.

Today the woods, streams, and mountains of the National Forests attract outdoor recreationists in far greater numbers than the great western migrations. They still offer much of the best camping in the country, and by automobile they can be reached readily by most of the people.

On these public lands, the Forest Service has provided nearly 6,500 camp and picnic grounds with a capacity of over half a million visitors at one time. Although no two campgrounds are identical, you can expect certain basic things at most of them. Privacy is one, if you wish it. Campgrounds are blended into the landscape to preserve the forest atmosphere, and shrubs and trees serve to screen camping units. Each unit has a place to park, a cleared spot for a tent, a firegrate, and table and benches. Several units may share trash cans, drinking water, and latrine. Some campgrounds have service connections which will accommodate the popular mobile self-contained camper units. Not all sites for trailer camping have both a table and fireplace. Because of budget limitations; a "pack-in—pack-out" trash program has been adopted in some remote campgrounds. Some campgrounds in the back country are rather primitive and may not have tables.

In many National Forests, picnic areas are located near or adjacent to campgrounds. Picnic units contain a table, benches, and firegrate. Parking, water, and latrines are centrally located. Some picnic areas also have family camping units or community shelters.

Forest campgrounds grow more popular each year with experienced as well as amateur campers. To all visitors the Forest Service says, "Welcome to the National Forests—yours to enjoy, protect, keep clean!" This is the Forest Service's way of asking the cooperation of the one visitor in a thousand who might misuse or damage tables, signs, or other structures. Dollars saved by lowering repair and replacement costs can be used to build new recreation areas and to improve others to accommodate the increasing numbers of Americans using the forests.

If you've never camped, join those thousands who this year will camp in the woods for the first time. Get the advice of an experienced woodsman, or study camping magazines and books. Then plan a simple trip—don't be too ambitious your first time out—and head for the woods. Campers are friendly and are glad to share their woods lore. You'll learn a lot, and before your trip ends you'll be writing home, "Having a wonderful time!"

Juniper Creek, Juniper Springs Recreation Area, Ocala National Forest, Florida.



BACKPACK INTO WILD COUNTRY

Many experienced campers prefer to throw a pack on their backs and head into back country—the wilder parts of the National Forest System. There they seek to recapture the pioneer spirit of their forefathers by fending for themselves, whether traveling a little-used trail only a half mile from a road, or plunging into a 100,000-acre wilderness.

Hikers explore old trails and beat their way across country, making camp where day ends. Horse riders travel wilderness trails, sleep beneath the stars, and return to civilization refreshed. Fishermen trek to remote streams and high-country lakes, and hunters search the hills for next winter's venison and bear steaks. Families, too, enjoy the away-from-it-all experience of primitive travel and deep-woods camping.

To assist back-country campers, the Forest Service has blazed miles of trails, and provided primitive campsites—a few with three-sided shelters and firepits. Campers needn't use them, but they do simplify making camp.

The supreme camping experience for many people is a wilderness trip. In 1924 the Forest Service pioneered in wilderness preservation by setting aside the Nation's first Wilderness. The National Forest System includes 85 separate wilderness areas totaling 11.5 million acres. National Forest wilderness, mostly high mountain country, is managed to maintain its natural, wild state. No roads cross the wilderness and no motorized vehicles are permitted. The few trails are only for horse riders and hikers.

One of the delights of camping is the campfire. It sheds a friendly glow when shadows deepen into night, provides a warming crackle in the cold light of morning, dries clothes, and cooks food. But fire uncontrolled can be a demon.

Back-country camping in remote parts of a forest or deep in a wilderness requires careful planning and proper equipment. Before heading into the wilds, study a detailed map of the area and learn the terrain. Plan menus and select equipment carefully to keep loads light for horses and backpackers. For safety's sake, carry a first-aid kit to meet emergencies, and a map and compass to keep you on trail.

Wilderness campers are generally careful with fire. Their secret is to clear a spot down to mineral earth and build a ring of rocks to contain the fire. Then they keep the fire small and, when through, drench it with water and stir the ashes into the earth. The District Ranger appreciates this care, and so do the campers who use the site later.



BEFORE YOU ASK

The information below answers some of the questions most frequently asked about camping in the National Forests. For more detailed information than is supplied here and elsewhere in this booklet, write to the appropriate Regional Forester listed on the inside back cover.

Camping season: Usually runs from May 30 through Labor Day weekend, but in milder climates some campgrounds have a longer season and others are open year-round. Except where weather is too severe, campgrounds may be used at any time, but after the regular season, water is turned off, flush toilets are locked, and garbage is not collected.

Reservations: The majority of campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis—so come early if you are heading for one of the more popular campgrounds. Group campgrounds can generally be reserved in advance. Some of the most frequently used campgrounds are beginning to adopt reservation systems.

Permits are required for use of some Wilderness areas.

Length of stay: At the more popular areas visits are limited to 2 weeks or as posted.

Equipment: Bring your own tent, sleeping and cooking equipment, and plenty of food—fresh air builds the appetite.

Trailers: Small trailers may be used where designated parking space is large enough for car and trailer, but water, electrical, and sewage connections are not provided, and waste water is not permitted to drain on the ground. Some forests, however, offer separate trailer accommodations and provide these facilities, and there are also some commercially operated trailer camps in the forests.

Campfires and cooking: Fires may be built at campgrounds and other designated sites without a permit except in California. Before entering back-country or wilderness areas, check with District Rangers for permit requirements. Cut fuelwood is available at some campgrounds; at others you gather your own. You are not allowed to cut standing timber, bushes, or other vegetation. For quick and convenient meals, use of a gasoline stove is suggested.

Water: Most campgrounds have safe drinking water. Hot water and laundry facilities are available only when supplied by concessionaires.



Supplies: Fresh milk, ice, and other provisions can be obtained in nearby towns and sometimes from concessionaries.

Pets: You may bring pets, but they must be kept on a leash or under control. Pets are also subject to State laws; some States require that dogs be kept on a leash in established camp and picnic grounds.

Firearms: They may be carried in the forest and fired where safe and in compliance with State laws; they are specifically prohibited in Federal and State game refuges within the National Forests.

Fees: The Forest Service charges a user fee at more highly developed campgrounds and other recreation areas. Fees range from \$1-4 per day for all occupants of the same motor vehicle. The fee is usually paid at a self-service station near the site entrance or collected by an attendant at an entry station. For persons 62 years of age or older a lifetime Golden Age Passport is available free upon request and presentation of suitable evidence of age. The Passport allows the bearer and all who accompany him in a single private noncommercial vehicle to a 50 percent reduction in the user fee. Golden Age Passports are available from National Forest offices, units of the National Park Service, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, and the Corps of Engineers. For hunting and fishing, State licenses are required. No charges are made for using restrooms, drinking water, roads, trails, lakes, and streams where no facilities are provided.

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICE INTERPRETS NATURE'S WONDERS

To assist campers and other visitors in understanding and enjoying the National Forests, the Forest Service has built Visitor Centers in different parts of the country. These Visitor Centers, although they contain exhibits and displays as do all museums, are not museums complete in themselves. They are focal points of interpretive complexes, designed to present highlights of the local forest story in a manner that will motivate visitors to explore the forest and enhance their enjoyment of the great outdoors. The Centers also further the visitor's understanding of wise management and use of forest resources.



Underwater windows provide visitors with a unique view of fish habitat in a mountain stream. Rainbow Pool Stream Profile, Visitor Information Center, Eldorado National Forest, California.

The botany, geology, ecology, zoology, history, geography, and archaeology of the area are explained with the aid of maps and photographs. Usually there is also an audiovisual room where illustrated talks and films complement the exhibits.

Forest naturalists greet visitors at the Center, orient them to the area and its many recreation opportunities and facilities provided by the Forest Service, answer their questions, distribute maps and brochures, and help them plan their visits.

In these ways, each visitor is prepared at the Center for his out-of-doors experience. When he leaves the Center he is motivated to see for himself not only the beauty of nature but also the underlying order of its complexity. The opportunity to enjoy his new insight into the workings of nature and its relationship to man is waiting for him just outside the Center.

VISIT THESE PLAYGROUNDS AND NATURAL WONDERS

Here are some examples of the unmatched variety of scenery, natural wonders, historic sites, and recreation opportunities in the National Forests:

North Carolina.—You can camp in the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina near the Linville Gorge Wilderness, a canyon of wildness and beauty, with a 90-foot waterfall that was visited, legend says, by Hernando De Soto in 1539. From the canyon rim, the famous Brown Mountain lights are often seen on clear, dark nights. As if from a giant Roman candle, the lights float upward, glowing brightly, fading and disappearing, and often reappearing to glow again.

Virginia.—Mountain climbing? Try Signal Knob in the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, where flashing lights relayed Civil War messages to Confederate troops threatening the Nation's Capital.

Forest visitors enjoy the view from Spruce Knob Observation Tower, Visitor Information Center, Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia.



West Virginia.—Jump up and down on the spongy bog in the Cranberry Glades of the Monongahela National Forest and shake a person 150 feet away. Wild cranberries and many types of wild orchids grow in the arctic-like tundra.

Kentucky.—Explore natural arches in the Daniel Boone National Forest. One arch is 60 feet high and 100 feet long.

Maine to Georgia.—Hike along the 2,000 miles of Appalachian Trail, which crosses eight National Forests from Mount Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia.

Minnesota.—Stop by the Forest Service's Voyageur Visitor Center at Ely. Then explore the water routes of the Voyageurs, the French-Canadian fur traders of the 1700's, through the wilderness of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in the Superior National Forest.

Colorado.—Drive through clouds to the crest of Pikes Peak in the Pike National Forest via one of the world's highest auto roads.

Montana and Idaho.—Follow the route of Lewis and Clark over the Lolo Trail across the Bitterroot Mountains in the Lolo and Clearwater National Forests. Campsites and other historic points along their route are marked by interpretive signs. Walk in the footsteps of the Nez Perce Indians whose trails across the mountains are still visible.

Pan for gold at German Gulch in the Deerlodge National Forest where once a thousand prospectors staked claims. Or hike to Grasshopper Glacier in the Custer National Forest where thousands of grasshoppers were entombed some 200 years ago.

Utah-Wyoming.—Visit Sheep Canyon and Flaming Gorge in the Ashley National Forest, where exposed geologic formations are estimated to be 1 billion years old. Red Canyon Visitor Center, on the edge of the gorge, provides a spectacular view.

Arizona.—Visit the cabin in Oak Creek Canyon in the Coconino National Forest, where Zane Grey lived when he wrote "Call of the Canyon," and view the colorful sunsets and red-rock cliffs he made famous. This spectacular scenery is used in many Hollywood movies.

Oregon.—Look into mile-deep Hells Canyon, deepest gorge on the North American Continent, where the Snake River forms the State line between Oregon and Idaho and flows between the Payette and Nezperce National Forests in Idaho and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Oregon. The canyon at one point is 7,900 feet deep and 10 miles wide. Along the Columbia River gorge near Portland, Multnomah Falls, second highest in the Nation, plunges down a cliffside in the Mount Hood National Forest.

Washington.—Gaze at snow-covered peaks while you pick wild huckleberries in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, or wander in the dense rain forest of the Olympic National Forest.



North Fork of the Flathead River, Flathead National Forest, Montana.

California.—Visit the Inyo National Forest where the oldest known living trees on earth, the ancient bristlecone pines, grow. Methuselah, the oldest tree yet found, is older than 4,600 years. Also within the Inyo are fossil graptolites, remains of sea animals that lived about 400 million years ago when the sea covered the area. The gigantic sequoias, nearly as old as the bristlecones and far more majestic, are found in several of the National Forests in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The largest bird in North America, the endangered California condor, is protected in the Sespe Wildlife Area of Los Padres National Forest near Los Angeles.

New Mexico.—View the panorama of Albuquerque and the Rio Grande Valley from Sandia Crest Vista Point in the Cibola National Forest. Explore dozens of ghost towns within the National Forests throughout the West.

Canada to Mexico.—Try hiking along the 2,300 mile long Pacific Crest Trail. It winds through 25 National Forests from Canada to Mexico, along the snow-mantled skyline of the Northern Cascades in Washington and Oregon, and down the John Muir Trail in the High Sierra.

A few days spent outdoors in any of these unique and inspiring places will be a vacation you will not soon forget, and probably will soon repeat.

THE DISTRICT FOREST RANGER

The campground you enjoy is but a small part of a large Ranger District, which may vary in size from 50,000 to 500,000 acres. Its manager is a District Forest Ranger who has a college degree in forestry or related fields and long experience as an assistant ranger. His job involves the management, development, and use of renewable forest resources—water, timber, wildlife, forage, and recreation—within his district.

Land management is a complex job that requires the Ranger to be an administrator, planner, salesman, and technician. He sells timber when it is ready for harvest and insures that young trees replace those harvested. He protects the land from erosion and puts good watershed management into

Painting and "cookouts"; both are popular forest activities.

Left: Challis National Forest, Idaho. Right: Flathead National Forest, Montana.





Timber and recreation share same forest acres near South Holston reservoir, Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee.

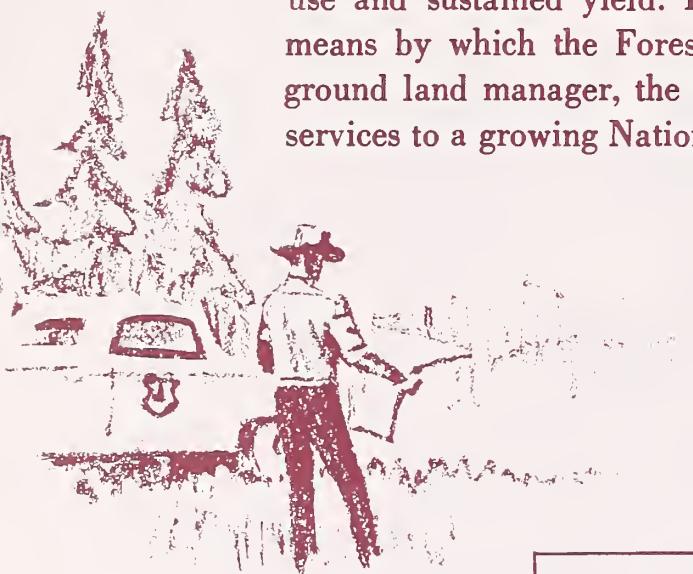
effect; water flowing from National Forests is a most precious resource. He makes sure that ranges are not overgrazed by big-game animals or by sheep and cattle.

The District Ranger improves the wildlife habitat and cooperates with State fish and game departments to provide better fishing and hunting. He watches for the first sign of the forest's most feared enemies: disease, insects, and fire, and he counters their attack quickly and efficiently. He develops recreation areas, and visits campers, hiking clubs, trail riders, skiers, and other groups making use of his district to get their suggestions for improvement. Somehow he finds time to talk to school children and to professional and civic organizations, for conservation—wise use of natural resources—is the concern of all.

These are only highlights of a District Ranger's responsibilities to the American people. He is their appointed steward and is accountable to them. But he is equally accountable to Americans of the future, for the forest lands that exist today must serve even more people in the years ahead.

The ranger's most important obligation, then, is clear. He must intensify management and development so that each resource—water, timber, wildlife, forage, recreation—will produce forest products and services at as high a level of supply as can be sustained without harming the land's ability to produce, now and in the future.

This is the Forest Service's policy of managing forest land for multiple use and sustained yield. It has proved to be good conservation. It is the means by which the Forest Service, the National Forests, and the on-the-ground land manager, the District Ranger, will continue to provide greater services to a growing Nation through the wise use of forest resources.



Other booklets which tell of the many uses and benefits of the resources of the National Forest System are: *National Forest Vacations*, PA-1037; *Backpacking in the National Forests*, PA-585; *National Forest Wildernesses and Primitive Areas*, FS-25; *Search for Solitude*, PA-942; *Your Water Supply and Forests*, AIB-305; *Trees of the Forest: Their Beauty and Use*, PA-613; *Wood: Colors and Kinds*, AH-101; and *Products of the American Forests*, MP-861. A handy and valuable aid for campers, especially in remote areas, is the leaflet, *Outdoor Safety Tips*, PA-887.

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INFORMATION

For detailed information on visiting National Forests and National Grasslands, see the map below for the name of the Forest Service region you are interested in, and address your query to **Regional Forester, Forest Service**:

Alaska Region

Post Office Box 1628
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Pacific Northwest Region

Post Office Box 3623
Portland, Oreg. 97208

California Region

630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, Calif. 94111

Northern Region

Federal Building
Missoula, Mont. 59801

Intermountain Region

324 25th Street
Ogden, Utah 84401

Rocky Mountain Region

11177 W. 8th Ave.
Box 25127
Lakewood, Colo. 80225

Southwestern Region

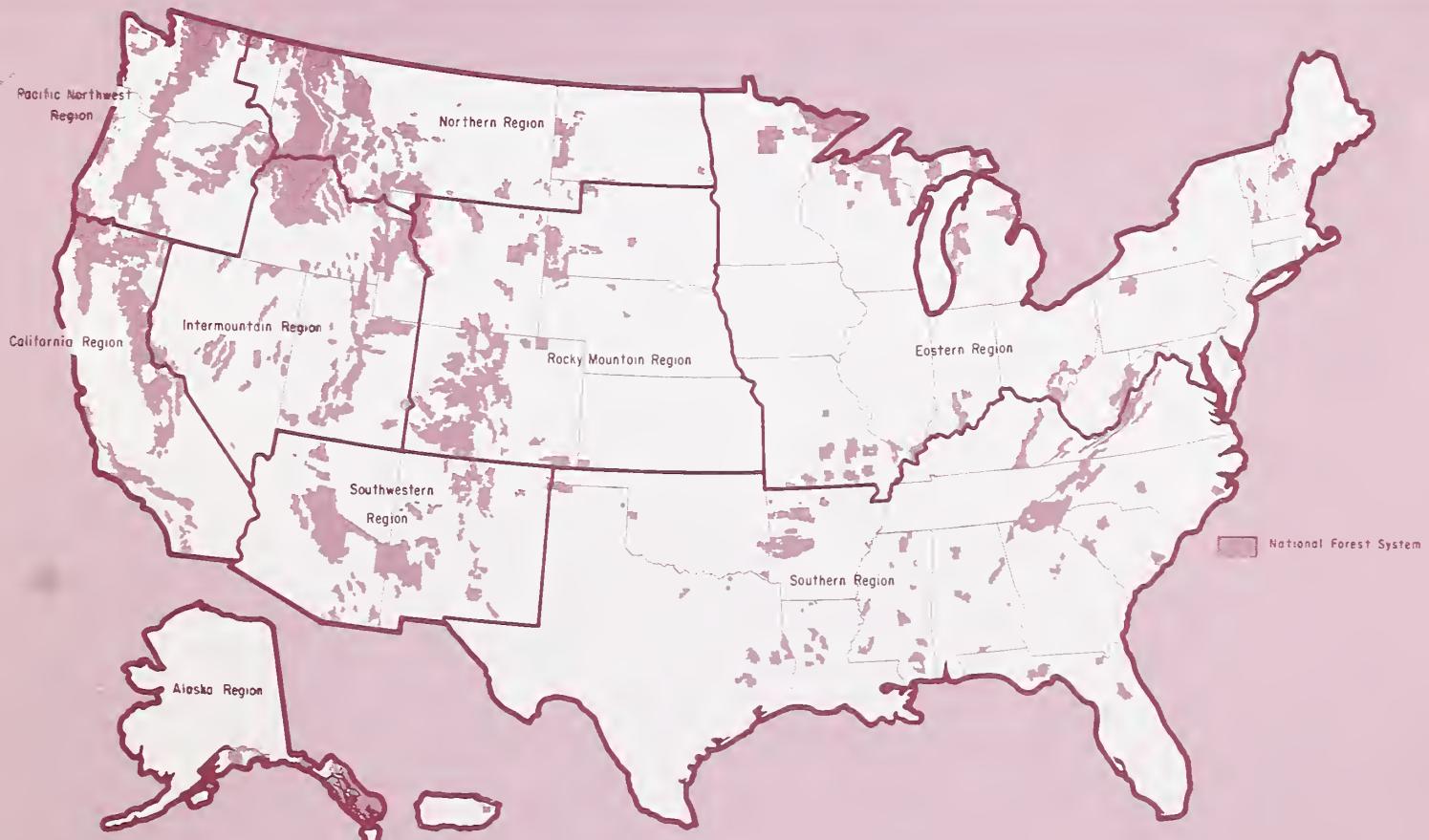
517 Gold Avenue SW.
Albuquerque, N. Mex. 87101

Eastern Region

633 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wis. 53203

Southern Region

1720 Peachtree Road NW.
Atlanta, Ga. 30309



The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is dedicated to the principle of multiple use management of the Nation's forest resources for sustained yields of wood, water, forage, wildlife, and recreation. Through forestry research, cooperation with the States and private forest owners, and management of the National Forests and National Grasslands, it strives—as directed by Congress—to provide increasingly greater service to a growing Nation.

